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## Take Libya off the terrorism list

By Tom Lantos

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When Libya announced it was eliminating its weapons of mass destruction, President Bush declared that nations that follow Tripoli's example will find "an open path" to good relations with the United States. Thus was born the idea of "the Libyan model," an encouragement to states to change their ways in exchange for improved ties with the United States. It was hoped that North Korea, for example, would be thus induced to consider reversing course.

Yet, 21 months after Libya's dramatic announcement, the Bush administration has not yet put the Libyan model to the test. Libya is still on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism -- despite having met the criteria for removal. The United States and Libya still do not have full diplomatic relations. It is obvious that there can be no model for rogue states to emulate if Libya itself is not seen to benefit significantly from its bold gesture.

We took a step in the right direction on Sept. 17 when Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with her Libyan counterpart, Abd al-Rahman Shalgam. In a joint statement, Miss Rice "reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to working to broaden and deepen the relationship between Libya and the U.S." That assertion needs to be backed up with more action, and soon.

Removing Libya from the list of state sponsors of terrorism is not only justifiable, it is overdue. The administration has acknowledged that Libya has not been involved in terrorism since before December 2003. This is a far longer period of non-involvement than the six-month-minimum required for removal from the list.

Libya lingers on the terrorism list primarily thanks to the testimony of an individual who claims in a plea bargain with the Justice Department that he was involved as a middleman in a Libyan plot to murder then-Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. Whether or not that claim is valid, it does not seem to indicate a pattern or a renewed policy of supporting terrorist groups, many of whom would like nothing better than to overthrow Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi himself. The incident seems to be over as an issue for Saudi Arabia: Upon ascending the Saudi throne last month, King Abdullah himself pardoned the alleged assassination plotters held in Saudi jails; later he announced that Saudi Arabia would once again exchange ambassadors with Libya. It would be odd indeed if the United States were more insistent on pursuing this matter than are the Saudis themselves.

As long as Libya remains on the terrorism list, U.S. economic institutions such as OPIC and the Export-Import Bank cannot support American private-sector investment in Libya. And as long as our two countries do not have full diplomatic

relations, U.S. citizens in the private sector will be reluctant to risk investing there.

Libya has expressed disappointment that its dramatic gesture has not elicited a more concrete response in Washington. Even worse, other nations show no indication of being impressed by the limited rewards Libya has reaped for its action.

North Korea has just apparently agreed to a statement of principles in the Six-Party Talks in Beijing. But it will take months, if not years, to work out a denuclearization deal with the DPRK that can be verifiably implemented. During visits to Pyongyang in January and earlier this month, I explained to North Korean officials the benefits that come with improved relations with the United States, including the possibility of trade, academic exchange and private-sector investment. But the DPRK is very unlikely to work out a final deal in the Six-Party Talks unless the Libyan model is a proven success.

Even if U.S.-Libyan relations were to flourish, I don't know if North Korea would rush to follow suit. Each case in international affairs is different, and one can certainly marshal an argument as to why Pyongyang would continue to adhere to their dangerous policies whatever the fate of U.S.-Libyan ties. Still, the Libyan turnabout on WMD and terrorism was a clear-cut diplomatic triumph for the administration, and it plausibly has direct application to the development and use of nuclear arms by Iran and North Korea. We can only know if the Libyan model works if we try it.

For those of us who hope for a peaceful resolution of those two problems, the Libyan model offers hope. Libya's turnabout was the Bush administration's success. A failure to follow through on promised improvements for Libya will only tarnish that.

*Rep. Tom Lantos, California Democrat, is the ranking member of the House International Relations Committee. In January 2004, he became the first member of Congress to visit Libya in decades.*

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